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**ENGLISH A**  
**EXTENDED ESSAY**

**“JOURNEY OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS”**

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## **ABSTRACT**

As a part of International Baccalaureate Programme, this essay was taken in hand as part of the English Literature and Language class. This essay analyses the “Desire for Revenge”, “Social Class Differences” and “Self Efficacy” as a motive that shaped the main characters’ destinies in *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

The purpose of this essay is to reflect on how characters inner conflicts, vengeful attributes and the social standings of 19<sup>th</sup> century London contributes to not only Pip, Estella, Miss Havishams’ but other characters life changing events as well.

The essay is outlined as;

In the first chapter of the four chaptered essay; how the desire for revenge shaped the characters life was discussed while in the second chapter social class differences role in characters destinies was discussed. On the third chapter, self efficacy’s role in characters destinies was given and lastly, other factors that affected characters future and present was represented.

In the end of the essay, it was seen that “social class differences”, “revenge as a motive” and “self efficacy” do effect characters future and present in more ways then thought.

**WORD COUNT:** 189

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Social class is one of the dominant elements both in the book and the 18th century England. To be a member of an upper class, one has to have a certain education. Thus, the need for improvement is essential. Dickens' novel *Great Expectations* directly reflects on this background of London.

### **1.1 Background of the Novel**

This essay explores the way in which “social class differences”, “revenge as a motive” and “self efficacy” themes are effectively given in Dickens novel. Social class difference is one of the most significant themes in the novel as it was a reason for the characters decision in life. Pip is a character that is most affected by social standings. His whole inner conflict is based on how he is different from the rest of the upper class and his morals versing the ones accepted by the society. Throughout the novel, Dickens portrays Pip's conflict in every aspect of different themes. Estella is a character that didn't have much to say on how she was raised. She was 'made' into something. Her life changes only when she was little when Miss Havisham adopted her. As a result of Miss Havisham's desire for revenge Estella cannot feel anything. One of the two people that is mostly affected by Estella's coldness is Pip. He is set on to do anything for her love. The other person affected deeply by Estella's numbness is Miss Havisham who comes to regret everything she has done as her creator.

The first part of the essay is about character's desire for revenge. Miss Havisham wants to take revenge from men population because of her past.

She was left at the alter on her wedding day. To the 21st century reader it may seem unreasonable for Miss Havisham to grieve on her lost love but according to the 16th century, being left such as, is equivalent to social suicide. Another character, Magwitch is a convict who was misjudged and found guilty because of his social standing. By turning Pip into a gentleman, it will be his way of proving to the society you can 'buy' being a gentleman. Estella's revenge is actually the result of Miss Havisham's vengeful actions backfiring.

The second part of the essay is about social class differences and how the characters are in need to change their life. It is not seen in an obvious form but from her words and little actions, Dickens gives the reader the sense of Estella's desire to change. Pip's love for Estella made him want to change his life because he thought that was the only way he could have Estella. However, in the end Pip learns nothing is worth losing nobility and true loyalty.

The third part of the essay reflects on self-efficacy. Towards the end of the novel Dickens shows the reader the drastic change of characters. He walks the reader through Pip's change of character however, shows the change of Miss Havisham only from Pip's visit.

In this study, the novel *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens was analyzed and discussed on how "social class differences", "desire for revenge" and "self efficacy" shaped the standings of the characters. The study

shows how these factors are used in different ways to shape characters personalities as well as their destinies.

## **II. REVENGE PLAYING A ROLE IN CHARACTERS DESTINIES**

Dickens portrays seeking of revenge as a despicable pursuit. Throughout the novel, revenge only harms, not only the individual seeking it but also the lives of others. Pip, is one of the characters that suffer most due to the quest of revenge. Characters who want vengeance not only do not receive it but their lives take a toll for the worse in most cases. Miss Havisham's motivation to get revenge shaped Estella's personality. However, her vengeance actions backfired and motivated Estella to get her revenge from Miss Havisham. Magwitch, who is a convict that was misjudged because of his attire, takes his revenge on the society by mostly making Pip a gentleman.

### **2.1 MISS HAVISHAM'S REVENGE AS A MOTIVE FOR HER APPROACH TOWARDS LIFE AND FUTURE**

Ever since her wedding day, Miss Havisham isolated herself in Satis House. Never taking her wedding dress off once and having the clocks stop at twenty minutes to nine, Miss Havisham grew hateful to the man in the society.

After inheriting her fathers fortune, Miss Havisham fell in love with a man named Compeyson. Not knowing his true pursuit, she wanted to marry him. On her wedding day, she received a letter explaining Compeyson defrauded her. Her humiliation and broken heart from that day pushed her to isolation with an overwhelming depression. Wanting someone to finally break

the walls of her past, she requests her lawyer, Jaggers to adopt a child for her. At first, She wanted a child to love and cherish. Her pursuits were only innocent but as time passed, she wanted to use Estella for revenge.

*"Believe this: when she first came, I meant to save her from misery like my own."*

From here on, the internal conflict of Miss Havisham rises. She wanted to protect Estella from a 'misery like' her 'own' but yet she continues to educate and practically build Estella as a heartless woman on the set to get revenge.

*"With this boy? Why, he is a common laboring-boy!"(...)*  
*"Well? You can break his heart." "*

This clearly shows Miss Havisham's true purpose on summoning Pip to her mansion. The time Pip spends at the Satis House, he served as nothing more than a common boy who was a practice tool for Estella on her quest of heartbreak.

## **2.2 MAGWITCH'S REVENGE AS A MOTIVE FOR HIS APPROACH TOWARDS LIFE AND FUTURE**

Magwitch is a character who has been judged in public's eye. He is looked down on to and is made to be a monstrous figure for young Pip. However, Magwitch won't forget the little boy who helped him in hard days and comes back to find him. Not only because he sees himself as a second father to Pip but also to turn him into a gentleman that will be Magwitch's way of taking revenge from the society. He wants to be proud of his creation

although this will be his downfall. The character Magwitch was chosen for analysis because he has impact both on Estella and Pip's life.

*'He was a convict, a few year ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky,' what do I say? I says to myself, 'If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?'*

Through Great Expectations, probably Magwitch is one of the few people who is generous with his Money. From this quote it may seem as if he is being sincere and helpful but in reality he is trying to by himself a 'gentleman', the one thing he could never be. In spite of Magwitch, to this point in the novel Pip is aware of the fact being a 'gentleman' is not something that can be bought.

### **2.3 ESTELLA'S REVENGE AS A MOTIVE FOR HER APPROACH TOWARDS LIFE AND FUTURE**

Miss Havisham created Estella because she was not capable of fulfilling the duties of vengeance herself due to her emotional trauma. Estella takes her revenge when she starts to treat Miss Havisham as coldly as she treats other men.

*"If you had brought up your (...) daughter (...) in the dark confinement (...) and had never let her know that there was such a thing as the daylight (...) if you had done that, and then, for a purpose, had wanted her to understand the daylight and know all about it, you would have been disappointed and angry. "If you had taught her (...) that there was such a thing*



*as daylight, but that it was made to be her enemy (...)she must always turn against (...) would blight her—(...) and had wanted her to take naturally to the daylight and she could not do it, you would have been disappointed and angry? "So," (...), "I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together make me."*

In here Estella can't believe how Miss Havisham, accuses her after purposely raising her to avoid emotional attachment and treat those who love with coldness. Sunlight here is used as a metaphor for love. Estella means that, Miss Havisham raised her without telling her about sunlight and now all of a sudden, she expects her to understand it without being taught. Also, she uses a better metaphor and says that as if Miss Havisham did ever tell her about sunlight but told her that it was her hated enemy, then reacted disappointment and anger when Estella did not naturally love the sunlight. Estella concludes telling her Miss Havisham made her like this and she is responsible. Estella says that both Miss Havisham success, Estella's coldness, and her failure, Estella inability to express her emotions, make her who she is. This is a very significant quote in the novel since it describes the effect of Miss Havisham's revenge on Estella. With Estella developing these emotions through her life towards Miss Havisham it's only natural for her to treat her without love.

*"What have I done! What have I done!" She wrung her hands, and crushed her white hair, and returned to this cry over and over again. "What have I done!" "*

This passage conveys the result of Estella's revenge on Miss Havisham. This is from when Miss Havisham began to regret how she had

transformed Estella into a cold- heated person. Not only did she regret manipulating Estella's emotions, but felt remorseful for deceiving Pip into thinking he would someday wed Estella.

### **III. SOCIAL CLASS DIFFERENCES PLAYING A ROLE IN THE CHARACTERS DESTINIES**

The existence of class difference started with mankind. With adopting a serendetrial lifestyle, it only gained more significance. In England, Victorian Society, it started right after Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century. It enabled capitalists to amass huge fortunes. More people moved from different areas to London in the search of a greater economic status. People with money and power created the upper class and had most say in the society whereas, people with poorer education and limited financial resources but higher moral values created the lower class that had no say in anything. Pip's a character who tries to endeavor his entity between the two extreme classes; the lower and the higher. Estella, on the other hand, is a character that comes from the upper class and was raised according to certain obligations.

#### **3.1 PIP'S NEED TO CHANGE HIS LIFE**

Pip's desire to change his life was first ignited with his visit to the Satis House. Meeting Estella and his feelings for her gave him the courage to start his journey to London.

The first need to change comes from his growing feelings towards Estella. Pip feels rejected and devastated of Estella's attitude towards him. So, he feels the need to change himself to be worthy of her approval. He leaves behind the ones that love him the most, Joe and Biddy, to get better

education that will help Pip make a huge social class jump from lower to the upper. While doing so, he goads himself internally on how far he should go to change for her. While struggling to find an answer, he rejects the caring relationships he previously had. He is attached to his past and he does try to accept it but that doesn't stop him from being ashamed of it since Joe and Biddy represent everything Pip doesn't want to be.

*"Finally, I remember that when I got into my little bedroom I was truly wretched, and had a strong conviction on me that I should never like Joe's trade. I had liked it once, but once was not now."*

He once looked up to Joe and wanted deeply to inherit his trade. This quote is an example of his change and his want to inherit new things. This is part of the reason why he starts to act distant to Joe later in the novel.

*"Biddy," said I, after binding her to secrecy, "I want to be a gentleman."*

His ambition in self-development leads him to grow strong bonds with Biddy, a girl who occasionally takes the role of a teacher. While Pip tried to improve himself and tried to become better every day he wanted Joe to do the same. However, Joe was not as ambitious as Pip was. He was content with his life and current status as a blacksmith.

*"Whatever I acquired, I tried to impart to Joe. This statement sounds so well, that I can't in my conscience let it pass unexplained. I wanted to make Joe less ignorant and common, that he might be worthier of my society and less open to Estella's reproach."*

In many occasions in the novel Pip gets angry at Joe's ignorance. He tries to teach Joe how to write and read. However, Joe has given up on himself a long time ago. Joe acts as an obstacle against Pip's change that includes changing his environment and the people around him.

Pip's fortune leads him to want to inherit new things, such as a romance. He wants Estella for himself. When Estella dances with Drummble in front of Pip, he feels hopeless.

*"Do you want me then," said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry, look, "to deceive and entrap you?"*

Pip still feels horribly inadequate around Estella, as unworthy and clumsy as ever although he has finally come to fortune. It's not actually love that Pip is so obsessed about: it's being rejected by Estella. She is a character that is rarely present in the story. However, Pip's thoughts and feelings make her a huge character in the novel.

### **3.2 ESTELLA'S NEED TO CHANGE HER LIFE**

Being raised by Miss Havisham, Estella is the perfect creation for taking revenge on men. She was raised and thought to be cold and heartless: making her only purpose in life taking revenge. The need to change her life is mostly present in her thoughts but mere in action.

*"It is a part of Miss Havisham's plans for me, Pip," said Estella, with a sigh, as if she were tired; "I am to write to her constantly and see her regularly, and report how I go on—I and the jewels—for they're nearly all mine now."*

Although, Miss Havisham claims her intentions weren't to ruin Estella's life, from this quote it is obvious how her actions resulted. Estella is 'tired' and Dickens almost conveys both Estella and the jewels as if they were one. Being under the constant watch of Miss Havisham Estella is tired. *"...for they beset Miss Havisham with reports and insinuations to your disadvantage. They watch you, misrepresent you, write letters about you..."* She has her moments that she expresses she wants to be loved and to love but she finds herself incapable of doing so. She sees herself as a "candle" that is under "moths, and all sorts of ugly creatures". She believes she cannot help herself.

#### **IV. SELF EFFICACY PLAYING A ROLE IN THE CHARACTERS SELF REALIZATION**

The time period Dickens lived was just the break of Industrial Revolution. It was another chapter for the world and with the growing want to move to London, the heart of the Revolution, a ground for being better and more resistant came into action leading to ambition. In the novel, the theme 'want of self-improvement and ambition' comes as a result of Pip's true intentions; to skip classes. His desire to self-improve leads him to act differently with his closest ones and in many occasions push them away. Miss Havisham's self realization comes with regret and needing forgiveness. However, she doesn't try to take any action to change anything. Pip on the other hand made a striking change when he went through his epiphany state.

##### **4.1 PIP'S SELF REALIZATION**

Pip as an child is always looking forward to learn and write. In the first pages of the novel, this doesn't seem to be anything more than just the pure want to be better. When, Pumblechook comes to Mrs. Joe with the news of

Miss Havisham, a lady, is asking for a young boy to play at her house, Mrs. Joe forces Pip to go there. Through his play dates with Estella, he grows more and more fond of everything the upper class represents. Later on, he starts to question everything about his own lifestyle. His questioning results in his displeasure and causes Pip's move to London with the hopes of achieving better living conditions.

With everything Pip has been through the biggest element in Pip's self-realization is his conflicts. Through Great Expectations, Pip goes through mainly two different kinds of conflicts that contribute to his becoming. One of them is his internal conflict and the other one is his conflict with the society.

#### **4.1.1 PIP'S INTERNAL CONFLICT**

The audience sees Pip's internal conflict starting with his constant battle upon how he should act towards Joe. In London, at any given chance of Pip meeting with Joe, he experiences confusing thoughts and emotions. He is basically torn off whether or not he should accept Joe and Biddy or he should reject them all together.

*"Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together, as I may say, and one man's a blacksmith, and one's a whitesmith, and one's a goldsmith, and one's a coppersmith. Divisions among such must come, and must be met as they come."*

While he asks for Joe to stay a part of him wants him to leave. This inner conflict is solved in the final stages of Pip's journey when he goes through a stage of epiphany. He sees that all this time Estella's approval and

her love prevented him from seeing the ones who loved him. Once he recalls this, he decides to leave his 'great expectations' and return to his small but honest life. This indicates that Pip has finally come to the realization that he needs to establish his own morals instead of the ones that others and society have encouraged him to believe were his.

Pip's, probably greatest inner conflict is seen when Magwitch explains him it was he who had given Pip the chance to be a gentleman. Pip denied seeing or making any kind of association when it comes to not just Magwitch but generally to convicts. Pip's opinion is based on how the society sees and portrays the convicts. They are said to be cold-hearted, non-deserving criminals at the end of the social rankings. When Magwitch returns as the reason for all his wealth and success as a gentleman, Pip must reconsider his values and eventually comes to accept Magwitch for the loving, caring man that he is.

Many of the initial critics who have read 'Great Expectations' thought that there was only one antagonist in Pip's life and it had been himself all through the novel. It was his own expectations that Pip believed in and leads him to act the way he did. He made himself believe there was only one-way to achieve these expectations and it was to be distant to people who cared for him the dearest. He made himself believe to the idea of having Estella to himself. When looked closely in the novel, it is seen that Estella, as a character does not appear so frequently. It's the thought of her that appears in every single page. This signifies that Pip has pushed the idea of her onto himself because of her external qualities and not of her true character, as he was never even happy when he was with her. In the end, however, he learns

that self-worth comes from inside and turns away from his “great expectations.”

#### **4.1.2 PIP’S EXTERNAL CONFLICT**

Through the novel, Charles Dickens touches upon the class system of Victorian society. Starting from the very rich, Miss Havisham, to the convict, Magwitch, to the middle class, Pumblechook, and finally the poorest peasants of the country, Joe. The people of the upper class did not mix with the people of the lower class. As a result, Pip fights with another conflict aside from his internal one, with the society.

Moving to London is a milestone in Pip’s life. In the London he arrives to rich only gets richer and class difference between the upper and lower only widens more and more. In a society that practically tells you how to feel, Pip is confused and mixes his own emotions with the ones implied on him. The idea of social class standings is one of the things that was implied on him. He obtains a different act with different people from different social classes. Is this relied on his perception of their characteristics or does it rely on the prejudice the society has set for him? Dickens sets a clear resolution for this when he makes Pip leave London to his old lifestyle.

Pip goes through a major social class jump with the move to London. He was to become a gentleman aside from gaining wealth and success. He wants to be respected but the question Pip tries to find an answer while battling with the society is that should he give up his loyalty to his loved ones? Joe is Pip’s lifetime friend and is the hand Pip always has. However, Pip is



ashamed to be seen with him in public. From the moment Joe steps in, he questions when he will be leaving and why he is here. The most significant part of Joe's visit is that Joe referring to Pip as 'Sir'. This signifies that they are not in the same class anymore. Joe is hesitant and doesn't know anymore how to act next to Pip. Pip is still trying to improve himself and he is forgetting that he came from the same social ladder Joe is in.

*"First," said Mr. Jaggers, "you should have some new clothes to come in, and they should not be working clothes. Say this day week. You'll want some money. Shall I leave you twenty guineas?"*

Jaggers, addresses these words to Pip with his new arrival. He is actually indirectly insulting Joe and is indicating that Pip won't have any associations with the lower, working class anymore. This overall shows the reader that Joe and Pip are two different people now and from here on they won't share anything common. Once again with this quote, Dickens shows how money and status can change family and friend relationships. Joe, someone that has been there for Pip for all his life, is looked down onto. Pip does feel bad and asks Joe to stay with him in London while hoping he wouldn't. Joe tells Pip that he does not blame him for the awkwardness of their meeting, but he chalks it up instead to the natural divisions of life. He practically blames the society's image of social standings. The blacksmith concocts a metaphor of metal smiting to describe these natural divisions: *some men are blacksmiths*, such as Joe, *and some men are goldsmiths*, such as Pip. In these simple terms, Joe arrives at a wise and resigned attitude toward the changes in Pip's social class that have driven them apart, and he

shows his essential goodness and loyalty by blaming the division not on Pip but on the unalterable nature of the human condition.

#### **4.2 MISS HAVISHAM'S SELF REALIZATION**

Although all the clocks in the house stopped ticking, Miss Havisham is very well aware of time is passing without ever stopping. Her heartbreak is the one thing that shaped Miss Havisham in the novel and as an outcome also shaped Estella's life and character. Estella's was thought to be cold by Miss Havisham, so she finds it abnormal for Miss Havisham to expect anything more from her. Estella's treats everyone including Miss Havisham with the same cold attitude. Her outburst is one of the things that made Miss Havisham realize what she has done.

Miss Havisham's made the purpose of her life center on making everyone around her just as unhappy as she is, especially men.

*"Miss Havisham's intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience, a sting for the greedy relations, a model with a mechanical heart to practice on when no other practice was at hand; those were the first smarts I had. "*

The only reason she has invited Pip to come and play with Estella was so that she could practice on breaking boy's heart. However, her plan backfired with Estella growing up. She did wanted to make everyone just as unhappy as she, however not Estella. Seeing the person she has created for the first time Miss Havisham goes through series of emotions that all lead to her regret in the end. *"Oh," she cried despairingly, "What have I done! What*

*have I done!"* Miss Havisham cries these words as she begs Pip for forgiveness. She only comes to the realization when Estella's shows her no love.

*"I want to pursue that subject you mentioned to me when you were last here, and to show you that I am not all stone. But perhaps you can never believe, now, that there is anything human in my heart."*

While Miss Havisham dies trying to correct her mistake, she contributes to Pip's self-realization. He learns to carry on with his life and continue his daily activities and if possible, fall in-love again. This quote is also an example of how much of a dynamic character Miss Havisham is. In the beginning she was a determined, cold lady but as time moved on, she became older and regretful. In the end she still she burned out alive because of the dress that is a symbol of the past. This clearly is another way of Dickens, portraying Miss Havisham being the one who set her own death.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens, is a novel that shapes main characters destinies according to certain themes that are closely relatable to the novel's context.

Dickens, shows how social class differences, desire for revenge, self-efficacy can shape and change people from all different kind of backgrounds. Estella for instance, is not happy with her life and wants change although she is from upper class. Pip is a character that is from

lower class but has the most significant, noble traits one can ask for. He was first driven by the human instinct of wanting more however, he realizes all the good things he has in life and starts to appreciate what he has rather than try to change it.

In conclusion, both Estella and Pip's life change in many aspects. Their lives are made according to decisions made by not just their self but also others. Miss Havisham has a great affect on Estella's character. By shaping Estella's character she indirectly affected Pip's decisions and his 'expectations' since he did everything out of his love for Estella. Furthermore, if it weren't for Miss Havisham's revenge maybe Pip would've never come to the realization of what he has. For better or worse, just like Estella in the end of the novel, Pip changed and grew to be much more mature. So in the end it can be said that; themes 'desire for revenge', 'social class differences' and 'self-efficacy' really did shape characters' destinies in Great Expectations.

**WORD COUNT: 4018**

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